

5 JUNE 1975

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CIA probbers told Gold slaying linked to Bay of Pigs invasion

By ROY MEYERS
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The Rockefeller Commission investigating the CIA has been given information allegedly linking the unsolved 1963 slaying of Cleveland Mervin Gold with Mafia involvement in the CIA's abortive Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.

A spokesman for the commission told The Press that a Cleveland has turned over information that is now in the hands of the staff. But he declined to comment on what action the commission may take on the information.

The Cleveland, who was involved in the original murder investigation, insists the probe was halted abruptly in 1963, presumably on orders from Washington.

The informant says a Mafia-CIA connection may have been outlined in papers turned over to the FBI on the day Gold's battered body was found stuffed in the trunk of his car on a lonely road in Solon.

Months before he was slain, Gold told his wife Lily that he had several envelopes hidden in the overhead crawl space in the garage of their Pepper Pike home.

"If I leave some night and don't come back, give these envelopes to the U.S. Attorney," Gold told her.

On July 8, 1963, the day Gold's body was found, his wife turned over four 12-by-15-inch envelopes to two FBI agents, who took them to the U.S. attorney's office here.

The late Merle McCurdy, U.S. attorney at the time, told newsmen that a two-page affidavit was "among the papers."

Bernard Stuplinski, who was the as-

sistant U.S. attorney under McCurdy, now maintains that the only thing in the four large envelopes was the affidavit, which alleged that Alex (Shondor) Birns had given stolen Canadian securities to Gold.

(Birns, who was the prime suspect in the Gold murder case, died last Mar. 29 in the fiery explosion of his Lincoln Continental in the parking lot of a West Side bar.)

Asked at the coroner's inquest if she had ever inquired of her husband as to what was in the envelopes, Mrs. Gold answered: "He told me it was better that I didn't know."

Authorities later found a tape recording of a call between Gold and Birns in which Gold said he had a 23-page single-spaced statement that threatened to tell all and to name names.

This statement supposedly never was found by authorities. The Cleveland reportedly has told the commission that he once was told that the statement was, in fact, in the four envelopes given to the FBI.

He maintains he was told later that the investigation was halted on orders from Washington because of allegations in the statement that would have been damaging to the Kennedy Administration.

This is the scenario provided to The Press by the Cleveland:

In 1959 and 1960, there was a series of thefts of negotiable securities in Canada, amounting to more than \$8 million and allegedly arranged by the Mafia.

The purpose of the thefts reportedly was to generate cash to be given to the CIA to be used to help finance an invasion of Cuba.

As early as the spring of 1959, it is known that then-Vice President Richard M. Nixon was urging CIA intervention in Cuba with the purpose of overthrowing Fidel Castro.

In the spring of 1960, President Dwight D. Eisenhower approved a \$13 million budget for the operation that

was later to become the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion during the early months of the Kennedy Administration.

Organized crime leaders allegedly approached CIA agents to offer additional funds for a successful overthrow of the Castro government. In addition, Cuban gangsters would also be enlisted to aid in internal insurgence.

In return, once Cuba was again in friendly hands, organized crime would be given the green light to run again its lucrative vice operations in Havana, including gambling, narcotics and prostitution.

The stolen securities reportedly were channeled to various areas around the United States to be converted into cash. Gold reportedly came into possession of a quantity of the stolen bonds, perhaps as much as a million dollars or more.

Only, instead of following instructions, Gold may have tried to keep the lion's share of the funds and then skipped the country to Israel when it became known what he had done.

When he returned from Israel, he was a marked man — in two ways.

He knew too much and had to be eliminated. But first, those he betrayed wanted to find where he had stashed the bonds and cash.

That could explain why he was beaten and tortured before being killed.

And, the alleged CIA-Mafia involvement also could explain why an intensive murder investigation suddenly stopped before all leads were exhausted.

If the envelopes did contain such information, they would probably have had to make their way directly to then-Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

At that time, the Bay of Pigs fiasco was a major blot on the Kennedy record. If it also became known that the CIA was dealing with organized crime it would have been catastrophic for that Administration.

An obvious decision would have been that one more unsolved murder would be a small price for keeping such negotiations secret.

Gold, Mervin